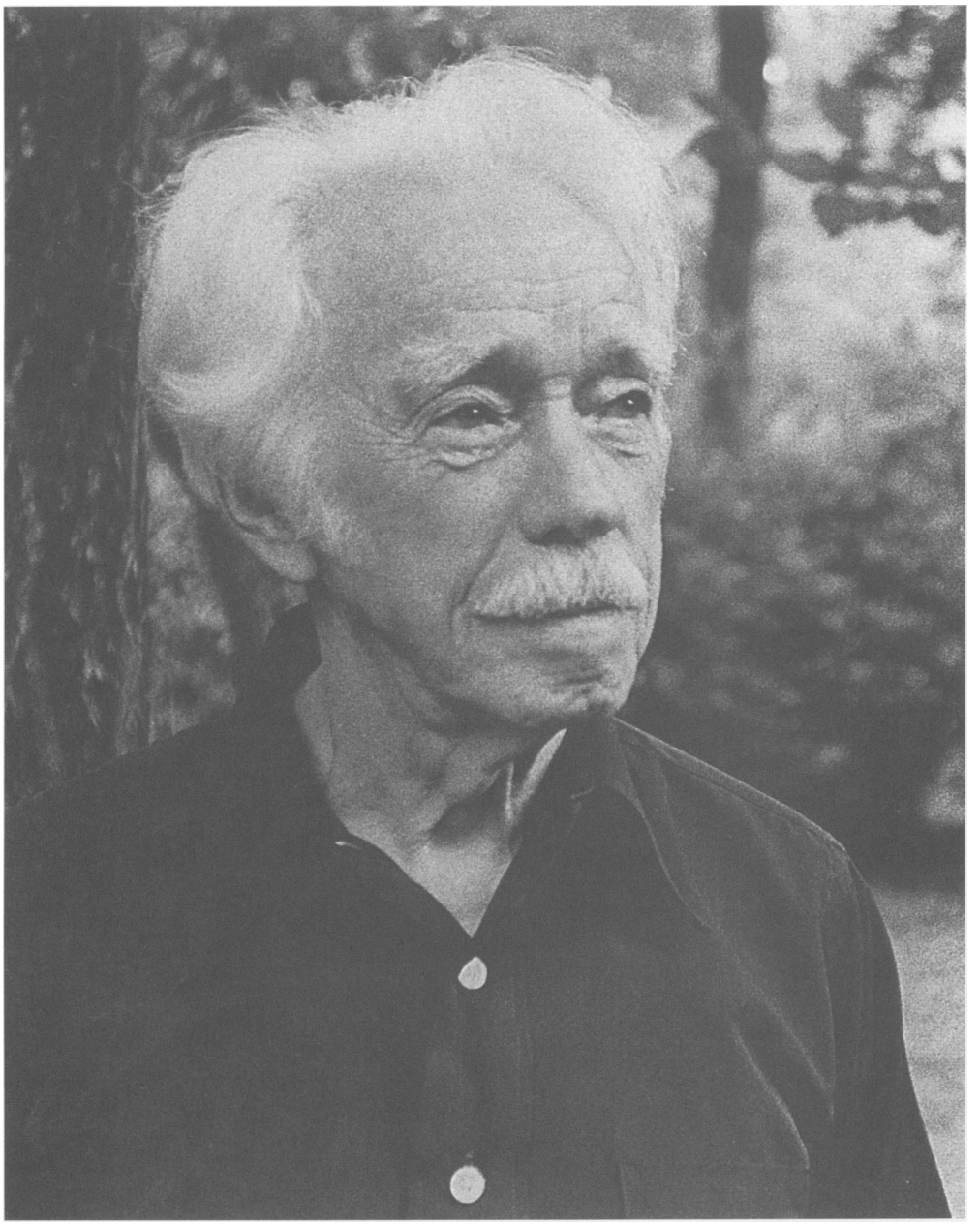

FRED S. KELLER
Aiken, South Carolina, 1979 (photo: Roberts A. Braden)

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In Memoriam

Fred S. Keller (1899–1996): Introduction

Jack Michael
Western Michigan University

Behavioral analysis lost one of its principal founders and supporters with the death of Fred S. Keller on February 2, 1996, at the age of 97. Fred wrote three obituaries for possible use by his survivors. The longest one is reproduced below. My comments here are meant to supplement his modest account with a review and appreciation of his influence and his accomplishments.

Among his many gifts to our field are two educational innovations that changed the course of behavior analysis history: the undergraduate teaching laboratory (the "rat lab") and the systematic introduction to psychology that is presented in *Principles of Psychology* (1950), written with W. N. Schoenfeld. Both lab (also a collaborative effort with Schoenfeld) and text were developed for use with the introductory psychology course at Columbia College starting in the late 1940s and continuing into the late 1960s, but they had a major effect on the characteristics and dissemination of behavior analysis throughout the United States and beyond. Hundreds of psychology courses adopted this unique type of undergraduate laboratory in which students demonstrate principles of behavior with a series of exercises using a live rat, and that laboratory experience is cited by many behavior analysts as the critical factor drawing them into the field.

Address correspondence and reprint requests to Jack Michael, Psychology Department, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008.

The text, usually referred to as *K & S*, presented the essence of B. F. Skinner's *The Behavior of Organisms* (1938) in an easily understood form, and integrated Skinner's work with other theories and results in experimental psychology. The novelty and effectiveness of the book came from its being easy to understand by college students with no background in psychology, yet generating a sophisticated repertoire with respect to what was at that time a radical departure from mainstream thinking about behavior. Even without the accompanying laboratory, *K & S* was such a clear, coherent, and persuasive version of behavior analysis that many who had no contact with Columbia College were recruited into the field as a result of studying the book.

Another educational innovation is, of course, the Personalized System of Instruction (PSI), or the Keller Plan, developed first for the type of college course that is usually based on lectures and text, but subsequently adapted to many other types and levels of instruction. The system as devised by Keller had several features that in configuration made it dramatically different from most other college instruction at the time, and in many respects it was more effective and more satisfying from both the teacher's and the learner's perspective. It was Keller's hope that PSI would eventually replace most traditional college instruction, and although this does not seem to be happening, it has been a valuable addition to educational methodology. PSI

courses are in effect worldwide, and because of PSI several of the components of the system have separately infiltrated other educational technologies. As with a number of other behavioral "better mousetraps," adoption has been hindered by factors having nothing to do with effectiveness, cost, and satisfaction by users, and for Fred and his many collaborators in the PSI movement this was a source of considerable disappointment. The last word is not in, however. Dramatic changes are rapidly occurring in higher education as a result of the increasing use and even reliance on computer technology. Many forms of traditional classroom instruction are in the process of being replaced by more individualized systems, and PSI is already a long step in that direction. If Fred could have lived another 10 years, he might have realized his dream of a more effective and more satisfying form of public and private education and enjoyed the role that his PSI was playing in this development.

There is still another Keller contribution that will continue to affect our field even in the absence of his further personal involvement. For many years Fred had been writing an autobiography, and at the time of his death it was almost up to date. It is a treasure in several respects. Fred's account of life in America during most of the 20th century is clear, factual, and written with wit and charm; furthermore, it is the account of a behaviorist. It will thus be of special interest to behaviorists, but will also be of value to anyone interested in recent American history. More relevant to the readers of this journal, however, are Keller's keen and firsthand observations of many important developments in our field. His account will be especially fascinating to those who have witnessed or participated in some of those same developments, but also to new members of our professional community who are interested in the origins of their current orientation. (The autobiography is in the early stages of preparation for publication, and will probably be available in a year or so.)

In addition to contributions that are in a sense permanent products, Fred has had another type of influence, no less important, that stems from his personal effectiveness as a teacher and manager of educational systems. The Columbia undergraduate curriculum, the text by Keller and Schoenfeld, and the rat lab with its graduate assistant instructors created a social context that produced a large number of the most distinguished teachers and scientists in our field. Of course this was not solely Keller's doing. His academic colleagues, especially Schoenfeld, and the graduate students who were a part of the system were very important ingredients of this highly productive setting, but Keller was certainly a catalyst and major contributor. It is hard to believe that the field of behavior analysis could have developed into anything like its present form without the Columbia influence. The teachers and scientists who were Keller's and Schoenfeld's students, their students, and their students' students make up a large share of the current behavior analysis community.

A similar effect took place in Brazil, where Keller is acknowledged by many as the father of the thriving behavior analysis movement in that country. As at Columbia, Fred had the advantage of effective and inspired colleagues, but he was personally responsible for a good deal of that effectiveness and inspiration. After returning from Brazil, he continued to be an influential teacher for another 9 years, at Arizona State University and at Western Michigan University, playing an important role in the shaping of those programs.

Fred, like the other Fred, was a strong supporter of the Association for Behavior Analysis (ABA), attending most of the first 20 annual conventions. He participated not only as a presenter, symposiast, or discussant but also in other invaluable ways. His affectionate clowning with Skinner was a source of

great delight at a number of ABA banquets, and showed them both to be talented comedians. His presence in a presentation audience gave the affair a touch of class, and many young poster presenters will long remember the thrill of having Fred Keller question and encourage them about their work. He directed special interest at the international participants, especially those from Brazil, with whom he would exchange news of mutual friends, often in Portuguese.

Fred had still another kind of influence, perhaps for many his most important. He was a model for many essential professional and personal qualities. He was a model of what a teacher should be, of how a public presentation should be made, of how to accept an award with humility and appreciation but also with wry humor, encouraging us not to take ourselves too seriously. He was a warm and modest man, much loved by many. Although we are deeply saddened by his death, still our memories of this wonderful man, as friend and colleague, will continue to provide us with much happiness.